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PUSSY-WILLOWS AND ALDERS.

DESPITE the chilly winds the alder tassels have ventured to appear. They hang all winter, packed up close, like little cocoons; but when they feel the first warm sunshine, they elongate rapidly, and as if by their own weight; and then under each brown scale we note the stamens charged with golden powder. A slight jar is sufficient to discharge this pollen, which must be carried by the winds to a great distance. I am inclined to think that an arrangement for cross-fertilization is here exhibited, as the sterile

other up a tree, and were so soft and downy that I irresistibly stroked their fur. Some were pearly, and even silvery in appearance, and others assumed various shades of color, almost as in changeable silk. I gathered a large handful of these queer posies, and with them wandered slowly up the road, like old Chryses, by the "loud resounding sea."

Soon I came to a clump of alder bushes, the showy tassels streaming in the wind like little pennons. Some of them were four or five inches in length, and when I gathered them drooped caressingly over my hands. There is something tender and almost respon-

the whole. I am aware that I am not using art terms, but I find my vocabulary too limited for the occasion. One must love these early comers dearly, must be in perfect sympathy with them, to describe them. Their golden pollen, which is as a benison to the friendly, to the indifferent, or the flippant, is as blinding dust.

—W. W. Bailey.

THE GRAPES ARE SOUR.—The world has long agreed to accept the moral of Æsop's Fables, and if it has ever disputed any, it is certainly not the moral of the Fox and the Grapes. That grapes are sour, the world



THE FOX AND THE GRAPES.—DORÉ.

catkins droop from below the fertile. The latter are smaller, of a deep brown-red, and afterward develop into woody appendages, which adhere to the twigs throughout the winter, and are rather unseemly in appearance. In the long dreary winter I had almost forgotten how beautiful are these natural tassels. A few days since I strolled over the shore road. The wind was blowing briskly, and the river had become a miniature ocean, upon the beach of which the billows broke with a pleasant suggestion of the sea-side.

Here I made up my vernal bouquet. The pussy-willows formed its basis, and were more than usually pretty. The little tufts scattered up and down the stems resembled small white squirrels chasing each

sive about them to many persons; I am never sure but that they are conscious of my admiration. When symmetrically disposed with the pussy-willows the effect is very charming and unsurpassed by the later flowers with their wealth of form and color. The ground tint of the alder tassels is yellow, and this is relieved by the deep red scales. To the appreciative, the appearance is that of golden hair confined by a net.

There are sometimes as many as four tassels in a cluster, of differing lengths, and of perfect grace. The shades differ, as the clusters are more or less expanded, and thus a pleasing variety is given. The "pussies" greatly aid in giving unity and beauty to

over, is the verdict of all who fail to reach them. When the politician cannot obtain the place he covets, he tries to discourage his rivals, and his argument is—the grapes are sour. When the general retreats from the enemy whom it is his business to engage, it is because the enemy is too contemptible for notice. The grapes are sour. When the lover ceases to sing serenades under the window of Dona Inez, it is because he has discovered—the shrug of his shoulder tells the rest—the grapes are sour! The two cavaliers in Doré's illustration have come to this conclusion, and the damsels above are evidently of the same opinion. At any rate they are not sweet upon them!